

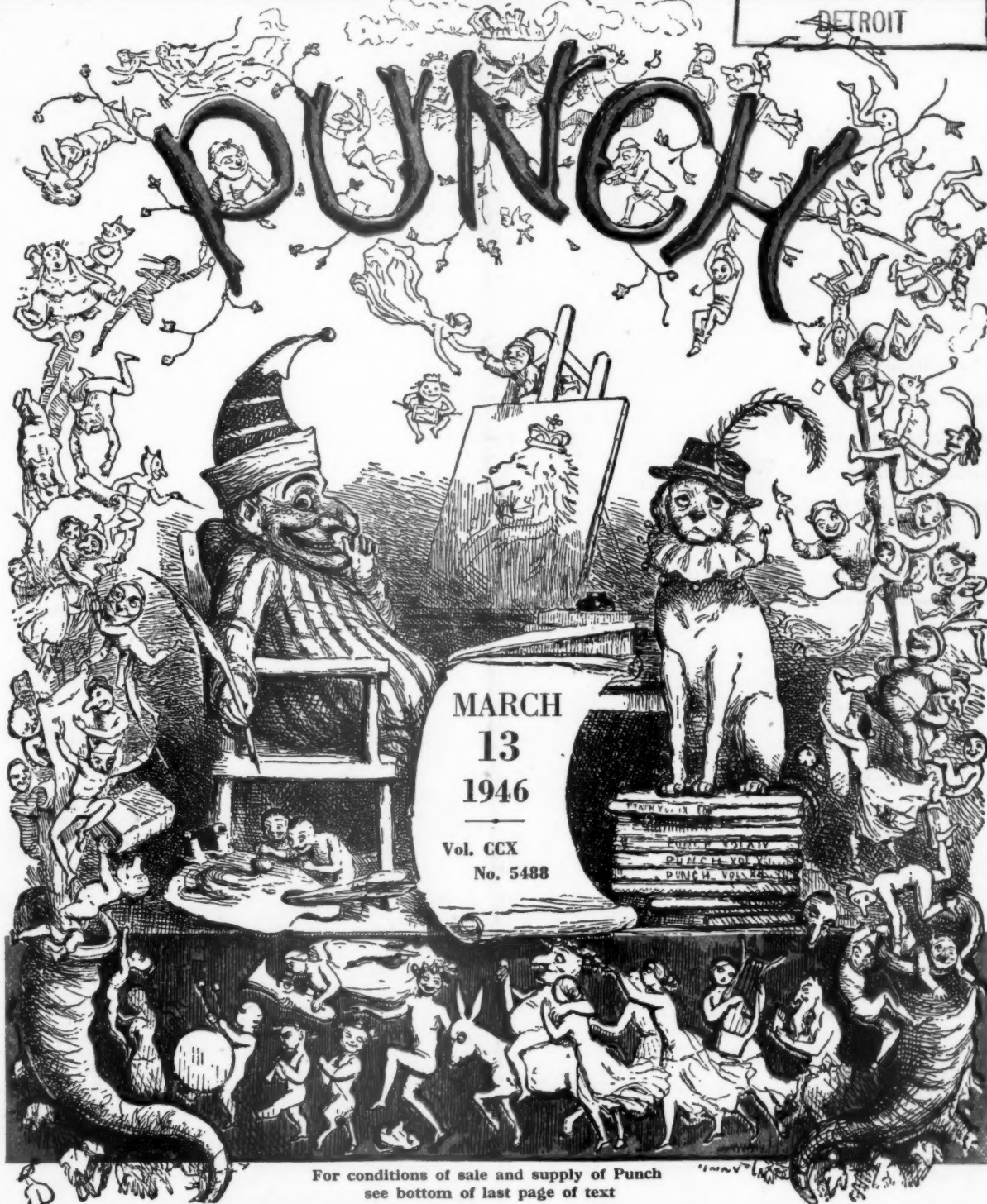
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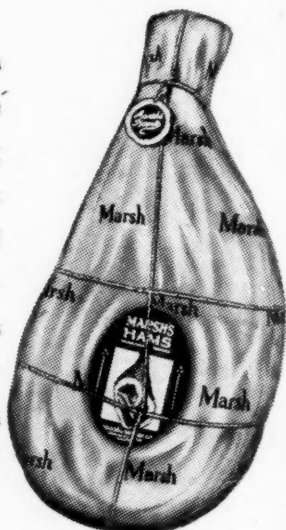
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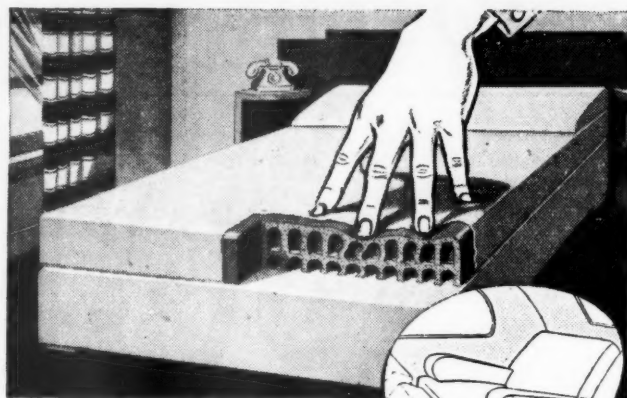
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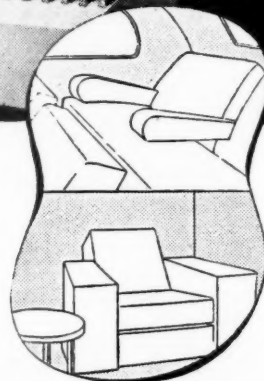
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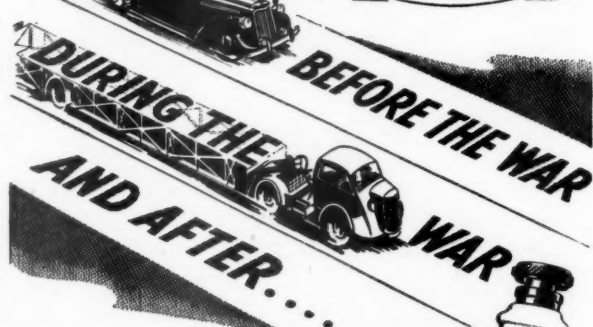
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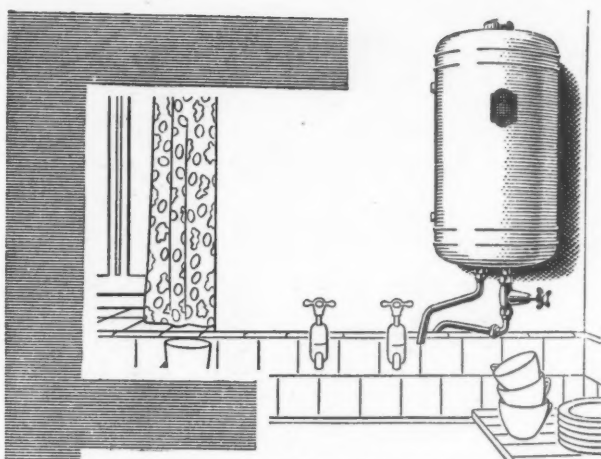
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SMOOTHING
SOOTHING
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DESPITE six hard war years and these days of reconstruction, you will always find at Austin Reed's one male comfort or another to defend you from the weather. We cannot, at present, provide those refinements which made shopping in Regent Street such a peace-time pleasure. But we can give some assistance to help you comfortably to the other side of spring.

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IN devastated Northern Norway the plight of the homeless throughout the long bitter winter has been pitiable indeed. Salvation Army Relief teams are at work in North Norway, in North Finland, North - West Europe and Holland. Relief work, already begun in the Far East by Salvation Army Officers freed from Japanese internment camps, is now being carried on by workers from Britain and Australia.



The need is vast, beyond description—but your gift **WILL** mean help to some child, some man or woman. Please send it to-day to **GENERAL CARPENTER**, 101, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, E.C.4

THERE'S THE SALVATION ARMY!

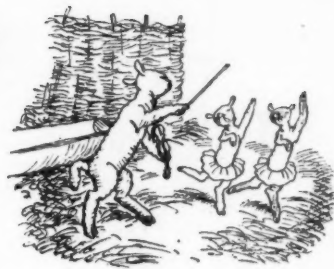
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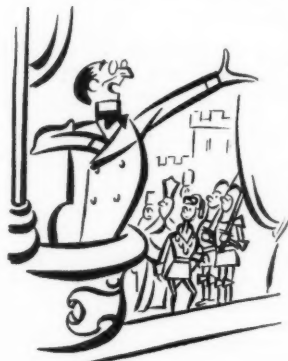
Vol. CCX No. 5488

March 13 1946

Charivaria

STUDENTS of international affairs were surprised that Franco in his recent statement on the closing of the Spanish frontier did not mention that he now has no territorial ambitions in Gibraltar.

"With the country calling for increased production," reads a Government appeal to save fuel, "we cannot leave any stone unturned to secure the needed economy." A correspondent retorts that he has been trying for a long time to burn both sides of his.



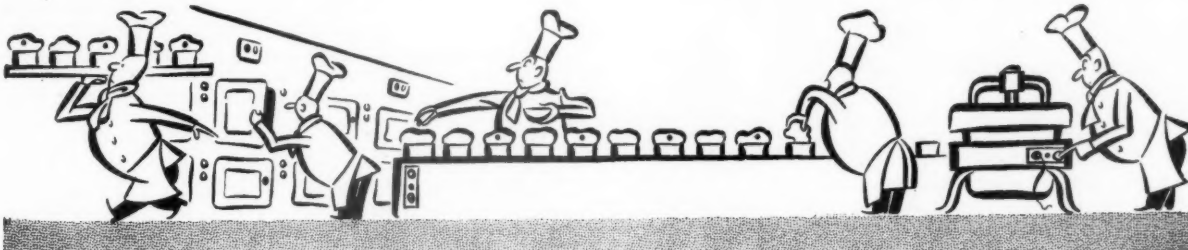
We read that during the performance of a play in a northern county one of the audience rose and delivered some of the lines. With commendable restraint the entire cast refrained from coughing.

It is said that new ration books are being printed. In view of the paper shortage they will fully conform to the war-time economy standard.

Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

"... it is time that those people who want to play each on his own wicket, should realise that while they are fiddling, Rome is burning."—From a speech in Parliament.

The absence of the railings has given Hyde Park a rural charm, says a writer. During the war years sophisticated London sparrows learned to perch prettily in the trees.



A housewife says she hasn't got many points to spare for tinned peaches. For that matter the Food Ministry hasn't got many tinned peaches to spare for points.

"Beside the wide Atlantic on the rocky Cornish coast Mr. Bevin has a holiday bungalow. He is there with Mrs. Bevin and has announced that he wants to be alone."—*Daily Sketch*.
Whose move is it?

The latest food headache for housewives at the moment of writing is that onions look like not being good for us again.

"Timing is the secret of first-class ski jumping," says an expert. Beginners will be content if they can avoid looking like a man being thrown out of a saloon.



A new gardening tool, which, it is claimed, will cut down the labour of heavy digging by half, is now on the market. We must get two of them.

Fashion Corner

"WANTED, good pair Men's Trousers or Flannels, 30 l., 36 w.; good Rug, small pair of Drawers for kitchen use, about 34 in. wide."—Advt. in *"Lancashire Daily Post"*.

"The best cakes are produced in electric bakeries," says a confectioner. Just at present they are apparently working on the alternating currant system.

The Three Sailors

I SAW three sailors drinking beer
In a Seventh Avenue bar:
The first one had a parakeet
And the second a new guitar—
But the third had nothing except a look
That he'd brought back from afar
Where the blood-stained islands are.

The first one talked with a mid-west burr;
He was big and broad and fair;
The blue Great Lakes were in his eyes
And Norway in his hair.
He came from a state where the earth lies flat
As far as the eye can stare.
He had a plainsman's air.

The second one was a mountain man
And he spoke with a mountain drawl.
His hair was red and his eyes were green;
He was narrow, and middling tall.
He was born with a chip on his shoulder-bone
In a shack with a mud-chinked wall,
Where the Blue Ridge foothills fall.

The third one's voice had an East Side tang:
He was swarthy and slim and neat.
He was got in a Bowery rooming-house
And born on Delancy Street,
Where the kids lie out on the fire-escapes
At night, in the August heat,
And the sidewalks scorch their feet.

The first was Olaf Christiansen;
The second was Pat McCoy;
But the third was Simeon Salvator,
The child of an hour of joy:
So some of the kids yelled "Wop" or "Kike"
And some of them whispered "Goy"
When he was a little boy.

Olaf's kin have plowed their land
For ninety years or more,
And Patrick's folks were backwoodsmen
Before the Seven Years' War:
But Simeon's mother passed the Lamp
Beside the Golden Door
In nineteen three, or four.

Olaf played with the parakeet
And tickled it with a straw.
It pecked a pretzel out of a dish
And held it in its claw.
"Of all the gals in those gosh-darned isles
She's the cutest one I saw—
So I'm taking her home to Maw."

Patrick hitched his foot on the rail
And tuned a slackened string.
He sang of the land where his forbears lived
When George the Third was king:
Of the Bonnie Banks where "the broken heart"
It knows no second Spring—
The way all hillfolks sing.

But Simeon, he'd brought nothing back
By way of a souvenir.
He'd scarcely heard of Dan'l Boone,
He was hazy on Paul Revere,
And Ellis Island was where his folks
Had faced their worst frontier:
So he listened, and drank his beer.

Simeon, he'd brought nothing back
He could carry in arm or hand,
But only something he'd never had
And still didn't understand:
Through sweat and blood he'd begun to feel
Like a man with a native land.
It was new, and kind of grand.

I saw three sailors drinking beer
In a Seventh Avenue bar.
The first one had a parakeet
And the second a new guitar—
But the third had nothing except a look
That he'd brought home from afar
Where the blood-stained islands are. JAN.

Wise Man

HE knows he is a very remarkable person, but does not expect others to notice it much.
He expects, when he is young, to be taken for younger; and when old, for older.

He laughs at conventions, but mostly observes them.
He does not mind being thought more foolish than he is, but is terrified of being thought wiser than he is.
He expects to be constantly misunderstood, realizing it would be unnatural if it were not so.

He mostly keeps the law, but does not think it virtue that makes him do so.

He does not call it charity when he buys a flag to avoid constant molestation in the street.

He does not expect others to show much interest in his doings, except when he would rather they did not.

He is not upset by insults, but values them as clues to the character of those who offer them.

He knows that what is just is not necessarily right.

He is more impressed by the sermons he preaches to himself than by those that other people preach him.

He knows that there is hope for all save the smug.

He knows that his feelings may mean much more than his reasonings.

He sees that principles are most applicable where their application is most inconvenient.

He never expects to get his fair share in a conversation. He is a docile pupil when taught to suck eggs.

He does not expect his funny remarks to be noticed, even though they are really quite funny.

He is quite unperturbed when everyone tells him he is wrong; worried when too many people tell him he is right.

He realizes that honesty is often the very worst policy, though not necessarily to be despised on that account.

He sees that so long as he is not afraid he has nothing to be afraid of.

He is unwarrantably cheerful when everything goes wrong; sceptical and suspicious when everything goes right.

He is confident that things will turn out for the best, though sensible enough to see that this is quite unlikely.

He pays little attention to a list of precepts drawn up by another.



GETTING DOWN TO IT AGAIN



"Care to assist in the preservation of a fast-disappearing social category, madam?"

For Men in Aprons

III

THERE seems to be some misunderstanding. This column is designed to help those who have not reached quite the same peak of efficiency about the house as the writer, and correspondence from persons in doubt or difficulty is welcomed. Correspondence from people who think they know better is not required. Once controversy is permitted to rear its ugly head we shall get nowhere. It had better be clearly understood that on all household matters the writer's decision is final.

Letters beginning "You have no doubt not had the lengthy experience as a man in an apron that I have had" will in future be thrown into the waste-paper basket unread.

Here is an example of the kind of thing that will not be tolerated. "This floating residue," disgustingly says a gentleman resident in south-west London, "can be driven down the sink drain by vigorous flushing directed at the grating by means of a rubber jet." That may or may not be so. Cobwebs can no doubt be cleared out of awkward corners by sloshing a bucket of milk at them. Sitting-rooms can be tidied by stuffing unwanted football boots behind the sofa cushions. But not in this house. No man fit to wear an apron is going to be content with such slap-dash house-husbandry as this. For goodness' sake let us make a good job of it while we are about it and slip the boots behind the *Encyclopædia Britannica* where nobody is likely to find them.

I must also regretfully decline to advise my Norwood correspondent who asks if there is any non-laborious way of lacing shoes so as to prevent the laces twisting. This column is for men in aprons, as advertised, not for men in their stockinged feet. If toilet hints are to be admitted I can see no end to it. Button-fixing gadgets, shaving dodges, new ways with old dinner-jackets, paragraphs headed "For Men With Sallow Skins"—these are the sort of bogs and thickets that await the man who treads that road. There is no way of preventing laces twisting, as a matter of fact; the thing to do is to twist them on purpose. But I am not going to be led into a discussion on such a trivial affair.

A more serious question comes to me from Birmingham, where my correspondent wants to know how to change the washer on a scullery tap. This is a question of such universal interest that I shall give it a heading. Thus:

HOW TO CHANGE A WASHER ON A SCULLERY TAP

Most people know *when* to change a washer, i.e., when wrenching at the tap with both hands, followed by several smart blows with a hammer makes no difference whatever to the rate of flow of the water. But very few realize that forcing a cork up the spout is virtually useless. Once water has found its way past the washer there is no cork in England, force you never so shrewdly, that will arrest

its progress. So there is no alternative but to change the washer. It is quite easy.

If the *cold* tap is dripping, look in the cupboard under the sink for a little wheel. Turn it. Now look at the tap. If there are any screws on it, unscrew them. If there are any milled or knurled edges, as on a sixpence, grip them with some gripping device and twist them. If there are any squares or polygons of metal, clamp a spanner on them and heave. This is called "disassembling the fitting" and appears on most plumbers' accounts with 10/- against it. Examine the bits and pieces and you ought to find some sections of chewed black rubber adhering to them. This is the washer, and care must be taken to put the new washer back where you found the largest deposits of the old one. Put the thing together again ("Reassembling 10/-). Materials used 15/6"), turn back the little wheel in the cupboard, and test.

If the *hot* tap leaks, the procedure is a little more complicated. You must turn *all* the little wheels in the house. They are found by radiators, on the storage tank, often under the stairs, and they abound in the neighbourhood of the boiler and, if you can get to it, beside or under or above the cistern in the attic. They may also be in linen-cupboards, under floor-boards and in the places where pipes congregate near the ceilings of passages and cellars. Besides turning all these wheels you should also pull down, or round, or (in some cases) up, any handles or levers you may come across, being careful in addition to turn as far as they will go any T-shaped taps you may be vague about. If this preliminary work is thoroughly carried out there is a very fair chance that the supply of water to the hot tap in the scullery will eventually fail and you can get to business. You will also have cut off the gas and electricity, but this will not matter provided you have had the sense to go to work by daylight. Don't disconnect the telephone, as this is often needed when changing a washer.

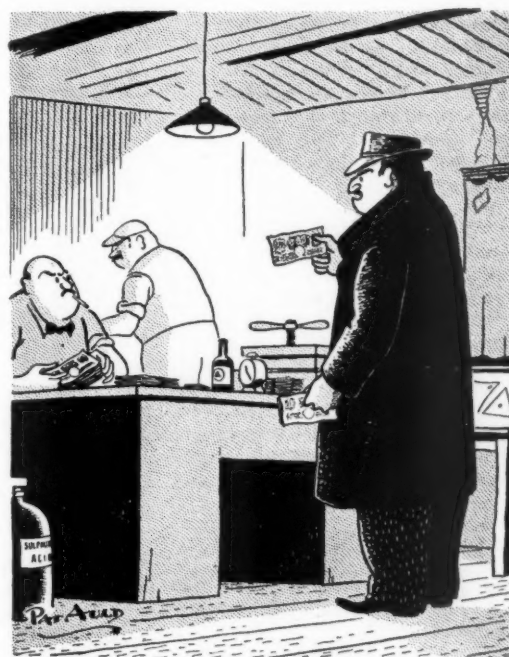
If the hot tap continues to run and is still running say ten minutes after you have finished turning the wheels, levers and T-shaped taps, there is a possibility that one of these wheels or levers was in the off position already and you have turned it *on*. Try turning each one severally back to where it started and note the effect on the flow of water. If this plan fails, turn two at once back to the starting position, and then another two, and then three at once, until you have worked through all possible permutations and have arrived at the position where all the wheels and levers, or "cocks" as we call them, are back where you found them. Of course should you succeed in turning the water off you must be very careful after changing the washer to see that you turn it *on* again, and by this I mean not merely that water comes out of the scullery tap, but that all the cocks are as they were at the beginning. This is simple enough if turning them *all* had the desired effect, but supposing the flow of water didn't stop until you had turned three or four of them back again? Are you going to know which to leave alone when you go round to turn the others on? You will be in a pretty pickle if you turn some tap *three times* in all, thereby cutting off the supply of water to the boiler and blowing the whole place sky-high. For remember this. Any fool can tell that the water is *not* cut off at all points by turning on the kitchen tap; but no man can tell whether the water is *on* at all points unless he understands the hot-water system of his house. And no man does.

I had meant to speak to-day about joints of meat served up with string running through them in more than one direction, but I see it is time to put the potatoes on.

H. F. E.

The Footballer

UP-ON oure pilgrimage ther rood withalle
 A thikke knarre that pleyed atte balle;
 In many justes and games hadde he be,
 And honoured wel in his fraternitee.
 The mussles of his armes weren stronge;
 I seigh hem righte y-twisted lyk a thonge
 That rippled al his stoute legges down;
 His eyen weren brighte; his hew was broun.
 A medlee schirt he hadde, of whyt and reed,
 And were the colours of his brotherheed;
 Of fustian were his shortes to the kne
 That showed lyk the knobbes of a tre.
 His hosen weren blew; his stoute shoon
 Embatteled were with studdes many oon.
 Of feints and passing coude he al the lore;
 In winning gaules nas him non bi-fore.
 A corner coude he take, and eek a throwe;
 So faste were his shottes and so lowe
 Ther nas no ward that mighte hem nat withstande,
 Or stoppen with his fote, or with his hande.
 At Chelseye hadde he pleyed, and at Whyt Harte
 Ageyn the Sporres, and wel born his parte;
 At Stamford Brigge and Charloun hadde he be,
 At Selhyrst al-so, and ay wonne his fee.
 Ful fetisly he had the score bigonne
 At Wembelye, whan that the cop was wonne.
 He bar his signe up-on his couvrechef;
 Whistlen he coude as he were righte a ref.
 Evere he rood the foremost on oure weye,
 For he was middel forward, soth to seye.



"Ten sbillings each for pound notes? You must be crazy—the pound's only worth eight-and-fourpence."

At the Pictures

SECOND ATTEMPT

ONE might almost suppose that the producers of *The Woman in the Window* had been so much affected by the published disapproval of the trick "happy ending" that was stuck on to that otherwise meritorious work that they determined to use the director, the stars and the same sort of story again and make no concessions to sentimentality. The result is *Scarlet Street* (Director: FRITZ LANG), a most interesting film, well-made and absorbing in the extreme, and noteworthy as almost the only Hollywood story involving a painter ever to show pictures some of which really look as if they might be good. The average painting in a film resembles a photograph earnestly smeared with mud; but these are worth looking at twice, and it is a pleasure to notice the art-haters in the audience gradually and uneasily realizing that a raucous horse-laugh was not, after all, the correct reaction to them. The painter is a "Sunday painter," a store cashier, unhappily married, whose infatuation for a worthless girl leads him by way of embezzlement to murder; as this kindly and tormented character EDWARD G. ROBINSON does not have to do much that he has not often done before, but it's a convincing and pleasant performance. JOAN BENNETT does well as the calculating, slatternly gold-digger, but the outstandingly memorable character is DAN DURYEA as *Johnny*, the mean, vicious, grasping smart-alec who is really loved by the girl and who gets wrongly executed for her murder.

The film is by no means so sombre and gloomy as this might suggest. They haven't been afraid of entertaining detail, and some of the scenes are surprisingly charged with amusement (*Johnny's* terrifying bonhomie with the art critics is beautifully comic); visually too the piece is full of interest. Of its kind, unusually good.

The British spy thriller *Night Boat to Dublin* (Director: LAWRENCE HUNTINGTON) has many of the old tricks,

but all well managed. Once again the secret the spies are after is supposed to be the atomic bomb—I suppose it will be long before we are shown any spies after anything else, so sacred is the name of topicality; but once again I

and we get down to the real business: false names and identities, feverish searches in hotel bedrooms, the sleek master-spy and his seedy sourpuss assistants, stern men in big overcoats waiting on railway-stations, "verbal fencing," and all the rest of it. The master-spy is *Faber* (RAYMOND LOVELL), but what chance has he against Military Intelligence, which at any moment can have the instant help of the police, or the other Services, or the Post Office or the railway authorities? The struggle is unequal, and for its suspense the story has to concentrate on our interest in the survival of particular people on the right side.

The whole film is done with a nice variation of pace, working up to an excellently quick passage as the end approaches. The playing is good, and there is a pleasant snap and sparkle about much of the dialogue. As a story it offers nothing fresh, but I found it entertaining. It has the added interest of a new face—MURIEL PAVLOW, who makes a most attractive impression in her first film.

I ought to feel guilty, perhaps, at being late, brief and unenthusiastic with this note on COCTEAU's *L'Eternel Retour*, which is being shown as *Love Eternal* (Director: JEAN DELANNOY). Normally I like almost any French film that comes over here, but I should warn you that I'm constitutionally unfitted to like this one. The characteristic French film excels with bright, authentic, amusing detail in a logically-worked-out story full of credible interesting characters; what we have here is an essentially heavy and doom-laden modern version of the story of Tristram and Iseult, Gothic in every joint, with statuesque blond principals incessantly attitudinizing with out-stuck lower jaws, and the occasional little touches of character clearly recognizable

as bits of French cheerfulness irrepressibly breaking in. The result of trying to fit the characters of modern French life into the rigid pattern of an ancient Celtic legend seems to me unsatisfactory. Pictorially the film is interesting, and it has a haunting flavour, but otherwise it finds me insensitive. R. M.



[Scarlet Street]

HIS TWIN SOUL

Kitty JOAN BENNETT
Christopher EDWARD G. ROBINSON

would point out that in a spy story the important thing is the chase, and that one seldom concerns oneself over the details of what the spies were really up to. There is even a moment here when ROBERT NEWTON as a



[Night Boat to Dublin]

PISTOLS FOR ALL

Military Intelligence officer stands at the rail of the Night Boat to Dublin and feels called upon to murmur some awed remarks about what an atomic bomb might do—the dramatic impact of which has been weakened, to put it mildly, in the last six months.

However, that moment is soon over

Too Many Middlemen?

A WEEK or two ago Sir Stafford Cripps made a statement that seemed to contain the key to all that has hurt and troubled me in the reconstruction programme. He said that for every five factory workers in Britain before the war there were three (3) distributors. Three million distributors!

Long ago the famous economist Adam Smith wrote this: "The sovereign, for example, with all the officers both of justice and of war who serve under him, the whole Army and Navy, are unproductive labourers. . . ."

"In the same class must be ranked some both of the gravest and most important, and some of the most frivolous, professions: churchmen, lawyers, physicians, men of letters of all kinds; players, buffoons, musicians, opera singers, opera dancers, etc."

No wonder economics is an unpopular subject with some people. But "unproductive labourers"—that's the point; how many of these people can the country afford to keep? And which group ought we to get rid of first? Not the buffoons, surely. No, let us begin by weeding out those three million distributors.

How many of them are middlemen, and how many middlemen are superfluous? Those were the questions I set myself to answer. I began by tracing the movements of a single common article, a petrol-lighter. I discovered that it had passed through at least forty pairs of hands between producer and consumer, that its price had risen alarmingly with each transaction, and that its flint was almost worn out before I got it. Now is this kind of thing necessary? I do not know the actual people involved in these complicated manoeuvres, but mentally I have dubbed them petrol-lighter agents, petrol-lighter merchants, chandlers, factors, brokers, wholesalers and fences. I point an accusing finger at the chandlers in particular and condemn them as redundant.

Next I followed the intricate system of transactions by which a simple common or garden egg came into the possession of my wife—at a price far in excess of that prescribed by the Ministry of Food. This egg had passed through no fewer than seventeen hands on its way to my breakfast-table. Its shell was covered with the

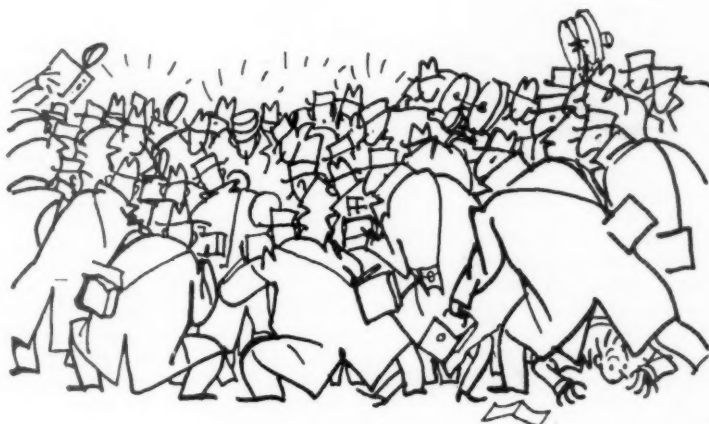
PRESS GANG

"We had such wonderful luck yesterday evening—"

Fongress



we actually had seats right next to the—



famous Mr. . . ."

hieroglyphics of the commercial world—things like

3d/41/Tonkin, Wednesday.

Mark-up 33.H.5.

Due date 11:3:46.

18/7:AML. Moorgate.

St. Botolph's: Not to be taken away.

I estimated that this particular egg had been handled by seven egg-factors, two egg-dealers, five egg-whiskers and three egg-merchants. I brand the egg-factors as parasites.

Next I examined . . . But I have said enough, I think, to prove my point. We have far too many middle-

men. They must be swept away without compensation or frozen Government stock.

But we must expect opposition. They are powerful and their propaganda is subtle. That song we hear so often—something about accentuating the positive—with its insidious line that sounds like "Don't mess with Mr. Inbetween." That's clever if you like!

Hod.

o o

Where the Rainbow Begins

"Men's overcoats dyed in six colours."

Notice in shop window.



"Watch. I just press this starter-button here and the car-park attendant will materialize from nowhere like a genie of the lamp."

Clothes

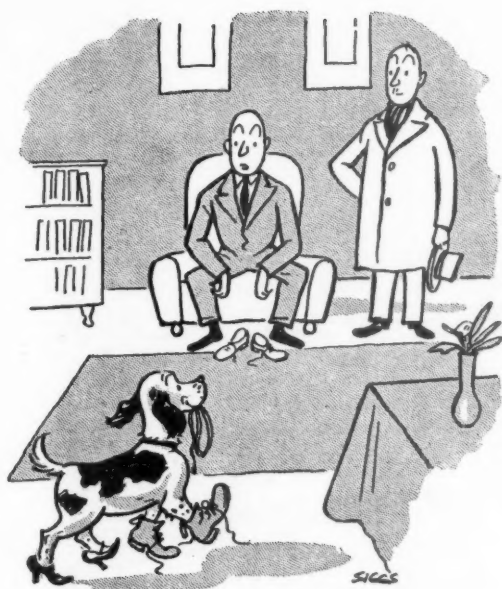
THIS is going to be a nice untropical article in which I shall not mention coupons, beyond reminding my readers that we had clothes a long time before coupons began (a glance in the cupboards of most of us will confirm this) and that we shall go on having them after coupons have ended—I mean after they have ended for everyone else too. So let us concentrate to-day on some of the permanent aspects of the subject, beginning with one of the most permanent, the coat.

The main function of coats is to make us one layer warmer; their subsidiary function is to make us one layer tidier, though not if the lining is hanging down below the hem. Psychologists are interested in the fair-minded attitude of the public to itself when this happens; it blames itself for not having noticed, and the coat for not having told it, just about equally. Another feature of coat-linings is their tendency to come apart at the arm-holes. This is because people putting their coats on, whether alone or in company, nearly always jam their arms into the arm-holes. If alone they jam them in because they are in a hurry, if in company because they are so busy reciting what a nice evening they have had. In time the coat-lining will come so far apart from the

arm-hole that the wearer will travel right down the sleeve-lining without realizing that it is a blind alley. This calls for the sort of joke that sort of coat-wearer is good at from experience, and for a resolution to do something about it—a psychologically noteworthy resolution because, although perfectly sincere, it lasts for no measurable length of time. Besides their linings coats have loops at the back that it is bad but sometimes unavoidable to hang them up by, some pockets to hold the things people turn out of their pockets when they are looking for something else, and a button-hole to put button-holes in. The buttons on a coat jut out on a peninsula of twisted thread which will give way one day but not yet, until it does. Before I finish with coats I must mention the people who, when they enter the sitting-room of a small flat, fold their coat up neatly and put it on the floor. Statisticians say they would have said these people lived in small flats themselves if it was not that people who do live in small flats are so proud of the coat-hooks they screwed on to the back of the front door that they would be the first to look for anyone else's. So statisticians think it more likely that these people live in houses or big flats and have come to their own conclusions about small ones.

All this about coats leads me to coat-hangers, those curved bars stamped with the name of some cleaner we have never sent our clothes to and finished in the middle with a hook which can be twiddled round to get our clothes facing the same way in the cupboard. (People always hang their clothes the same way round, psychologists say—not the same as each other, as far as they know, but the same as always, according to superstition and upbringing.) As their name implies, coat-hangers are used to hang coats on, but they are used for a great many other clothes too—about three times as many as they can deal with. No one ever has enough coat-hangers, an extra dozen soaking into the average cupboard without trace, and to make things worse there is a rule that visitors walking off with a coat-hanger will probably keep it as long as they are not found out, unless it is upholstered, when they will feel obliged at least to mention it to someone to get it off their chests. Shoe-trees are less overworked than coat-hangers, because not even the most human of us can get more than one pair of shoes on one pair of trees, but they have more variety, ranging from engineering feats to the simple kind with an end knob which is apt to work loose and fly up and hit us when we take the tree out, however urgently we warned ourselves the last time we put it back.

My readers will perhaps be expecting a word about moths. Moths have been written up quite enough in the practical sense, but I don't think anything has been said about the emotional aspect; so I will just remind my readers how they feel when they see a moth-hole, or rather when they scratch at what may be a moth-hole and find they have made one. How they feel is just how other people feel. Now I can get on to clothes-brushes, which are either the silver-backed kind that never worked or the humble wooden kind that was bought because it looked as if it would. The average clothes-brush takes up one piece of fluff a stroke but probably puts it back somewhere else, which would explain why people brushing each other's clothes go on for so much longer than the brushed person has time for. There is also a sort of human clothes-brush who tends to dive at people and pick pieces of cotton off them. Their chief feature is the way they say "You've got a bit of cotton on you." I don't really mean the way they say it but the way they always use those words. As for those people who spill coffee and things down their clothes their chief feature is their generous indifference to the consequences. This is because coffee is not spilt down



"I've been trying to teach him to bring my slippers, but he seems too stupid to grasp the idea."

clothes, or not to notice, except in company, when people are on their best behaviour to an extent which still amazes psychologists. The whole coffee-spilling business thus takes place on a mental scale, being mopped up by the concern of others even more than by the damp cloth everyone is so ready to offer to fetch.

A very important aspect of clothes is those knitted garments, jerseys, socks, gloves, scarves and all the other things people knit for themselves and for each other. Anything knitted by anyone else is more than a piece of clothing, it is a good deed and calls for assurances of satisfaction, and a tug at the pullover to show how well it wears, whenever the knitted-for meets the knitter. Nor are the knitters themselves exempt from obligation—they feel bound to maintain a follow-up service of kind inquiries which may mean no more than a desire to show off but will sooner or later land them with an order from someone else. Psychologists say they would like to make this an example of where vanity leads human nature, but if they did the whole process of knitting for others might dry up, and they would be the first to suffer. I must say a word too about sock-darners—just a word of encouragement for the fine work they are doing and a sympathetic reminder that to find one more hole after they have darned every hole in a sock is as much a rule of life as to find the teapot after they have finished the washing-up.

I must also send a message, though not quite so sympathetic, to those people whose shoe-laces break. *Go and get a new pair at once.* It is no use these people telling me that they can manage perfectly if they shift the whole shoe-lace to right or left so that half the length one end is transferred to the other end, making two good though shorter ends; they know as well as I do that next time they take the shoe off both ends instead of only one will come unthreaded, and the only difference between buying a new

pair in a week and now is that they will have a week of this sort of thing first. Still, I do admit that the satisfaction of getting a new pair after a week of a broken pair does help to make up for it all.

I feel that those of my readers with broken shoe-laces would like something cheerful to finish on, so let us end with a note about fancy dress. There is not so much of this as there was, but to normal people there never was a lot. Psychologists trace people's fear of fancy dress to their early party-life as pierrots, and say there is no worse preparation for a compulsory fancy-dress party than a memory of pompoms and hat-elastic. At the same time it is typical of human nature that when it does get itself dressed up as someone else it does rather enjoy thinking beforehand how much better it will look than the others. Psychologists would not have this otherwise. They say that if people who went in childhood to fancy-dress parties they could not escape from can still go to them for the same reason, then, in spite of everything, human nature is doing fine.

A Polar Perplexus

To Sir Stiffand Crisp, K.C., Esq.

SIR, DEAR SIR,—Mrs. Blaxtar sez I'm sufferin from a Polar Perplexus—Well I'm just nowhere and dont know how to down Mrs. Trixie Jones what lives next door and has borode my number 2 kettle wich she didnt boro but pinched while I was hangin out the linnin. Ive got it back yes I pinched it wen she was out kewing for fish but now it leaks badly but her blooming cheek she sez Ive stolen it and that it is a hilly jettimit thing just like me wich is a hinsult wot a lidy like me cant stick it, now can I Mrs. Goosegob what lives the other side, she sez go to lore and make her pay for wot she said about hilly and all the rest but sez I ow can I go to lore sez she get a lorie they're goin to be cheep on control prices so Ive spoken to Mr. Snoots who mends my shoes he says thats trew but you cant chewse the one you like and you'l have to wangle a lot and become a first class wangler to get Mr. Sir Stiffand Crisp Esq. to be your own speshul lorie becoz he dosent spoil the trade and work on the cheep if he can elpit. so I thort I would rite and arst you whether thats all trew swop me a bob and wether loriers are goin to be controled jist like dokters and whether you will all have panels and wether I can get on to your panel and you'l look after me jist as if I was a real lidy.

Yours very truthfully
POLLY TICKS.





"... and that be one of the stately 'omes of the Ministry of National Insurance."

Farewell to Brass Hat

THE time has come to put away
The hat that cost me six weeks' pay.
Brass Hat! You lovely brazen thing
With golden oak-leaves in a ring
Around that rather too large peak
With what authority you speak
(Or, as from noon last Tuesday, spoke)!
O Hat of Gold for hearts of oak
What deep hypnosis did you cause
That even gave the Stoker pause
Before he dared to pass you by
With blind and unsaluting eye;
That had the potency to stir
The Sub-Lieutenant to a "Sir"
And more than once has brought the
Wren
To act as if she were R.N.!

What works! What triumphs to achieve!

But, Chapeau, when we were on leave,
That was the time when you did best.
Selfless, without a thought of rest

You hurried round from shop to shop
Your blaze producing here a chop—
A mutton chop, a chop of meat—
And, five doors lower down the street,
Positioned by my wife so that
The grocer had to see you, Hat,
Matches, three boxes, three at once.
Then think of all the other bunce
Extracted from beneath the shelf,
Mined—counter-mined—by your gilt self;
The shop-girl who "liked naval men"
And sold me a real fountain-pen;
The restaurant which thought that brass
Bestowed a certain air of class
And actually let us in!
Ah me! The cigarettes, the gin,
The offal . . . How the English fall
For anything marine at all;
And how much more for all that gold!
But, there you are, the tale is told.
And, Hat, Brass Hat, just *entre nous*,
It was a ramp, I think, don't you?



THE INVINCIBLE UNION

"I want you to stand very close together and look as resolute as you can."

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Monday, March 4th.—House of Lords: The Age of Chivalry Returns—Almost. House of Commons: Sitting on Defence.

Tuesday, March 5th.—House of Commons: More About Defence.

Wednesday, March 6th.—House of Commons: Housing Minister in Attack and Defence.

Thursday, March 7th.—House of Commons: The Senior Service is Discussed.

Monday, March 4th.—The two Houses (all unknown to each other, as tradition demands) were dealing with much the same subject to-day. The Commons were on that perennial topic, man-power—this time in relation to our defence requirements. And the Lords? They were dealing with woman-power in relation to the right to sit in the Gilded Chamber.

LORD CECIL OF CHELWOOD, always the soul of old-world courtesy, politely moved that peeresses should have the right to sit in the House of Lords and, in fact, that women should be eligible to be created peers—er—peeresses—well, Members of the House of Lords. He also wanted life peers, holding that there were many people who might be extremely useful as Members of the House, but who might not want their sons to take the same gilded path. Twenty or thirty life peers, said he, would be enough to leaven the lump (well, that is what he meant).

LORD MANSFIELD, whose views are not normally regarded as ultra-modern, surprised the House by putting down a demand that peeresses in their own right should be free to sit in the House. He surprised their Lordships still more by announcing that he had not the slightest wish to see peeresses in the House.

Just as their astonished Lordships were deciding that Lord MANSFIELD was really Sam Fairfechan, strayed from Itma, he explained that he had tabled his motion simply because he did not like the terms of Lord CECIL'S.

Then Lord ADDISON, Leader of the House, got up and said the Government was sympathetic to the proposal—but would not agree to it. This variant of Lord MANSFIELD'S form of paradox (or was it really Sam Fairfechan's?) left the House still more confused, and nobody was particularly surprised when, it having been announced that the matter would be left to a free vote, there was no vote at all. So the peeresses' hopes did not die, they simply faded away.

The debate in the Commons was opened by the Prime Minister, in one of those factual, clear and unemotional statements he makes so well. We had to look forward to plenty of obligations in the world, he said, and to meet them we should have to maintain bigger Forces than we had been accustomed to. Our Forces would have to number at least 1,100,000, and of these 175,000 would be in the Navy, 650,000 in the Army and 275,000 in the R.A.F. He paid a well-cheered tribute to the conduct of our men in the various Armies of Occupation.

MR. R. A. BUTLER, speaking for the Opposition, pleaded that young men

fact, did not seem too sure peace-time is "just around the corner," as orators so often assured us was the case with victory in the period from September 3rd, 1939, onwards.

MR. CARSON (who is the "Baby" of the House) asked some questions about the attractiveness of the menus provided in the House dining-rooms, which, he seemed to suggest, were lavish. But MR. VAL McENTEE, Chairman of the Kitchen Committee, assured him with some severity that the excellence of the fare was due solely to the adaptive ingenuity of Major S. E. SIDWELL, the Catering Manager, and his staff, who gave even the humble pomme-de-terre striking new dress and alluring names. Anyway, said MR. McENTEE, there were no dealings in the black market or anything of that kind.

The House cheered—but from MR. CARSON there came no sound.

Tuesday, March 5th.—The debate on defence was continued—but at one time during Question-hour it looked as though "offence" would be a more appropriate subject. MR. HUGH DALTON used words taken to imply that Conservative Members asked questions for "clients." Not unnaturally, this was resented—loudly and fiercely. MR. DALTON at once replied (albeit a trifle toughly) that he had not meant what the Conservatives took him to mean—that the clients paid for services rendered. It took some time (and a whole lot of shouting) before this explanation was accepted.

Then the defence debate began again, and drifted on with few bright moments. The majority of these brighter moments were provided by MR. ANTHONY EDEN, who summed up the present position of the country and its defences so well that MR. A. V. ALEXANDER, First Lord of the Admiralty, winding up the debate at the end of the evening, thanked him for what he called a "perfectly accurate summary and appraisal."

MR. EDEN wanted more definition in the Government's picture of Britain's and the world's situation—especially in such details as the length of time young men would have to serve in the Forces.

MR. ALEXANDER went into action like one of the battleships he so stoutly defended from their critics. His main defensive armaments he reserved for his own supporters, who, truth to tell, were his and the Government's severest critics. "I don't," cried MR. ALEXANDER, "much like attack from behind!" The First Lord got his oratorical fleet into something of a whirlpool of metaphors. The Royal



"ET TU, ZILLIACE!"

"I do not much like an attack upon the Government from behind."—*The First Lord of the Admiralty, in reply to Mr. Zilliaceus.*

should not merely be thrust into the Forces to complete their knowledge of the finer points of the English language under the tuition of the sergeant-major, but should be given skilled technical instruction too. He gained a lot of cheers when he suggested that Empire defence should be a joint affair, and that the Mother Country should not always be the Universal Provider.

Thereafter the debate, which started as a plan to build up our defence Forces, became largely a discussion of the best means of getting men out as swiftly as possible—because, so many Members thought, demobilization was too slow. Some Labour Members were not too sure they liked the idea of peace-time conscription. Some, in



"Pardon me, Miss Perkins, but have you ever really seen a leopard?"

Navy, said he, was the spearhead of our national defences, it was also the backbone and the king and queen on the defence chessboard.

But nobody minded a trifle of that sort, and the House approved, without a division, the White Paper on the Government's defence plans.

Wednesday, March 6th.—To-day was Housing Day, but the houses that were to have bloomed in the spring were shown by recent official returns to have been a little delayed. So Lady MEGAN LLOYD GEORGE, taking part in the debate, wittily commented (in the words of the popular song) that "Spring Would Be a Little Late This Year." However, the absence of houses is an even more prolific source of talk and argument than the presence of houses, and so honourable Members made an evening of it.

Incidentally Lady MEGAN returned to the topic of her maiden speech to remind the House that, in some of our smallest and most picturesque villages there are still slums worse than those of the great cities. Loveliness and ugliness walked side by side.

Captain CROOKSHANK, winding up for the Opposition, complained that

the Government's plans would not do the only thing that mattered—provide the greatest number of houses in the shortest time. He then proceeded to provide the greatest number of "cracks" and quips against the Government in the shortest time, and in the process often had the House roaring.

Mr. ANEURIN BEVAN, the Minister of Health—and as such responsible for housing—got up to do a bit of private-enterprise roaring on his own account. He replied to the whole of the evening's debate without so much as a single note—and very effectively he did it.

Once or twice he got rough with the Opposition, but for the most part he was as gentle as a tornado. There was quite a lot of excitement when he charged his opponents with "paying abstract lip-service" to housing. But it turned out that most of the victims merely wanted to know just what *was* an "abstract lip." Still, it all went well in the end, and the Government won the day by 302 votes to 136.

However, as somebody put it: "Hard words build no houses."

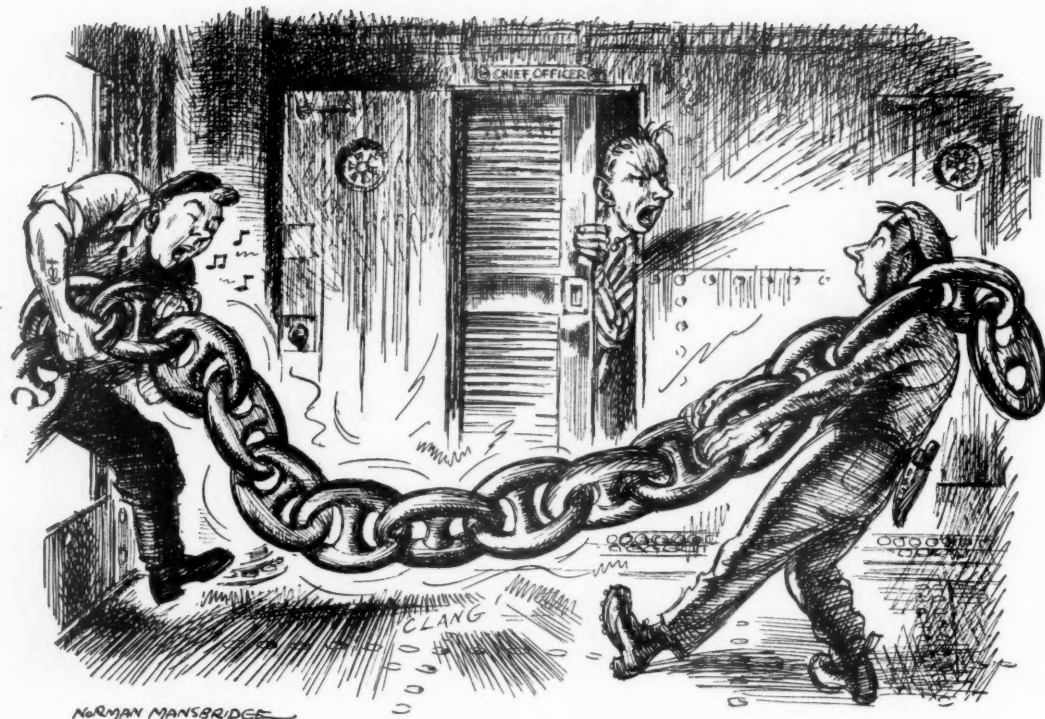
Thursday, March 7th.—To-day's debate on the Navy Estimates was chiefly notable—apart from a review

of the Navy's present condition by Mr. ALEXANDER—for a speech from Mr. JIM THOMAS, who spent a great part of the war at the Admiralty in Mr. CHURCHILL's Government.

The general view in the House is that Mr. THOMAS carries the traditions of the Silent Service too far, and that he ought to speak more often. However, he contrived to compress into a short speech a perfect Review of the Fleet which reflected at once his own pride in the R.N. and his confidence in its future, come what may.

Before the debate began, the Prime Minister made a couple of announcements. The first was that on April 1st (*was* there a flicker of a smile on Mr. ATTLEE's lips as he named the day?) the Ministry of Information would cease to exist. The second was that the Canadian Government had agreed to lend us £281,000,000 and to wipe out most of the debt we owed them over the flying-training plan which provided Britain with airmen at the time of sore need.

Ebullient Mr. RUPERT DE LA BÈRE summed up the view of the House in one word when the Canadian agreement was announced: "Magnificent!"



"Don't SING going past here—I'm trying to sleep!"

Aftermath of War

THE telephone is a mirror with a thousand different reflections. If you are listening to a familiar voice answering the home instrument and you hear "Well, that is kind of you!" spoken in a tone of frozen horror, you know that only quick thinking and a lot of solid luck crammed into the next five seconds can save you from a lecture on the Upper Zambesi in some wind-tossed hall. There is also quite a different way of saying the same words, and when I heard it I knew we were in for something good. I was dead right.

"You realize this means tails?" I asked.

"I suppose it does."

"Mine haven't been seen since 1939."

"Well, they must be somewhere."

"All I remember is thinking it didn't much matter what happened to them because tails as a habit couldn't possibly survive a second world war."

"I believe I've seen them in Aunt Hetty's chest."

"That's my morning coat. I can't wear that at a Hunt Ball. It isn't even a pink morning coat."

"What are tails?"

That is another of the extraordinary things about the blitz-hardened, doodle-proofed veterans who were still in prams when the war began. Just as one is getting used to the idea that they have never seen a banana and believe France to be a country which can only be approached in flat-bottomed boats full of tanks, they ask what are tails.

"They are a grotesque hangover from a time when people had their own laundries," I said. "Ideologically they are quite out of date. The white waistcoat industry is about to be nationalized—"

"Yes, but what are tails?"

"You remember the waiter with the wart on his nose who dropped the brussels-sprouts before the pantomime? Well, those are tails."

"Then how do they tell you from a waiter?"

"Often they don't. There's a military type which always asks me for a whisky and soda. Many a quiet half-crown I've earned."

"Come on, to the barn. We've only a few hours."

"Too true," I said. "This operation has Priority Number One. All hands to the pumps!" Not that I had much hope of my dancing shoes coming to light, but I knew I could get by in a pair of Wellingtons, with some sewing-machine oil to make them shiny. It was the central and mid-upper areas which really scared me. All those heavy deposits of starch and jewellery.

Time passed.

"Is this an evening shirt?"

"No, it's a singlet I used to have for squash. Leave the mouse's nest alone. I was never fond of the game."

A great commotion broke out at the other end of the barn, where many packing-cases had been lying in state for years.



"I've found your shirts! In the case marked 'BOOKS—RELIGIOUS AND LESS SO.' Poor things, they've gone quite grey."

"Fetch me your best indiarubber," I said. "Before the war they made one specially for this work."

"Surely bread's the thing?"

"Not with the husk in. Even Lord Hankey—"

"This is the cleanest."

Time had dredged a thick coating of sludge over its face, but, as I expected, the rubber tore through this like a bulldozer. I put it confidently aside.

"Anyway, I will keep my hand to my tie," I said. "Where is my tie? I shall look in 'CHINA—MISCELLANEOUS' and you try 'CROQUET AND WINTER THINGS.'"

A shout came from a dark corner.

"Waistcoat! But it has no back and thousands of straps."

"Splendid!" I cried. "That was a new engineering principle my tailor discovered in the mid-twenties. It did away with braces, which was thought to be nicer, I never knew why."

It had the slim lines of a Spitfire, but a colony of centipedes was holding a reception in the pockets and someone—at a political meeting, I suppose—had drawn a map of Australia on it in lipstick.

"Take this across the common to Mrs. Christmas," I said. "Ask her to boil it unmercifully, and tell her zero hour is seven this evening."

An hour later my waistcoat buttons were found in an alarm-clock inside a skating-boot. One was round and the other square, but I knew that in my stud-box was an oblong one which would give a sort of rough logic to the set. At the same time a white tie was discovered binding together the cheque-book stubs for 1939, rather a

spendthrift year, and it too was speeded towards Mrs. Christmas. It was wonderful to be going to a party again.

"Unless my tails turn up all this makes nonsense," I said desperately. Some instinct, for it can have been nothing else, prompted me to dive between my Uncle Henry, in oils, and the *Encyclopædia of Fossils*, in half calf.

"Here they are."

"What a ghastly stain on the lapel!"

"That's always been there, since that foreign-looking woman Hubert once married leant against me in a tango."

"No trousers."

"I can always ink the stripes out of my morning-coat ones."

"A pity."

"Oh, I don't know." An unexpected look of intelligence in Uncle Henry's vapid face made me dive in behind him again. My trousers were safely lashed to some linoleum.

"Could this be a collar?"

"Depends where you found it."

"There are dozens and dozens in a gun-case."

"Then it's a collar, all right. And rubberable, by the look of it."

"Good. Perhaps I can look out my dress now."

"By all means. Let's have tea."

A harsh cry gave us pause.

"Studs!"

"I threw them away after Munich."

I said. "They were beastly little brass pimples."

"What on earth are you going to do?"

"I'm wearing the Vicar's. They're real pearl."

I picked up the phone.

"Number, please?" asked the girl.

"It's just wonderful to be going to a party again," I said. "Give me the Vicar."

ERIC.



At the Play

"RED ROSES FOR ME" (EMBASSY)

MR. SEAN O'CASEY's new play is a glad reminder that the theatre is not only a place where bathroom doors are slammed on bottle-blondes and men with twisted mouths hiss wise-cracks over well-dressed corpses. It is written in the pure, rich English of the poets, the English you can still hear from old men spitting over bridges in the west of Ireland, and behind it burns an imaginative fire that leaps and scorches in a way our theatre had almost forgotten. The greater part of it is prose, if you can call this grand, surging language that, but prose broken by verse to form a rare and beautiful pattern.

The story is of a young Dublin workman, a gentle idealist, who sacrifices himself for his mates and is killed leading a strike for a shilling a day. It is slight, but enough foundation for Mr. O'CASEY to build a profoundly stirring play. *Ayamonn* is a visionary. He is desperately poor, but in the life of the mind, in the books he is exploring and the parts he is learning to act, he sees how much his brother under-dogs are missing. Rather than give up their cause he gives up his girl, who wants to play for safety, and when the bigger test comes he goes out to die in a bitter battle in the street.

The play, which is in four acts, opens quietly in *Ayamonn's* room and works up to a scene on the quays where a group of down-and-outs, inspired by his flaming eloquence, lose themselves in a splendid dream of forgotten ambition, while the shabby Dublin of the Liffey takes on the lustre of a magic city. Technically this illusion is thorny with difficulty for producer as well as author, but it comes off wonderfully, though I doubt if it is helped by the intrusion of a rather musical-comedy police chief and a very Protestant vicar. The latter, who takes a large part in the last act, when *Ayamonn's* body is carried to his church, is played with all Mr. TRISTAN RAWSON's peculiar skill, but I felt the character jarred. That even so very English a vicar of a slum parish in

Dublin could still be surprised by its squalor must be a cause for marvel.

In the background is the mad, intoxicating tide of Irish disputation, pregnant with insult and bearing mainly on the saving of the soul, provided by relays of those silver-tongued tramps whom Mr. O'CASEY uses so well as a kind of playboys' chorus. The cast, apart from Mr. RAWSON, is Irish, and acts with great spirit, though sometimes talking a trifle fast for English ears. Mr. KIERON O'HANRAHAN does very well as *Ayamonn*. Miss MAUREEN POOK gives *Sheila* the right edge of conven-

whacking doses of arsenic. An old beau, a famous doctor, makes a correct diagnosis; and the butler then blows his head off, leaving his widow unlikely to recover. The novel by Mr. FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG from which Mr. JOHN PERRY made this adaptation may have brought conviction to the moral and mental disintegration of *Agnes*, but in spite of the efforts of a very good cast the play decidedly does not. On the stage the switchover is so abrupt that even Miss FLORA ROBSON cannot make up the deficiency. Mr. BASIL SYDNEY has an easier job as the butler, but handles very expertly the change from the slick servant to the blustering peasant. Mr. WYNDHAM GOLDIE as the doctor makes such an impressive examination that a lady near me involuntarily exclaimed "99," and Miss BETTY SINCLAIR, Miss NANCY ROBERTS, Mr. ERNEST THESIGER and Mr. FRANK TICKLE bring welcome touches of comedy. But the play still creaks.

ERIC.

"STAGE DOOR" (SAVILLE)

A duet for two typewriters played by Miss EDNA FERBER and Mr. GEORGE KAUFMAN is expected to produce sparks, but this time a blown fuse must be reported. I understand the story has already gone well on Broadway and celluloid, but here it falls flat. It may be a matter of timing; but I could detect very little wit and that was on the weather-stained theme of Hollywood being too costly an asylum. A stage-struck girl is tempted to sell her soul to films, but holds out in virtuous poverty until at length, and it is at length, she gets her big chance. Miss PATRICIA BURKE is charming, which is all she is allowed to be. The action takes place in a hostel and mostly consists of other stage-struck girls running up and down an enormous staircase. I wished I could have bought them an escalator.

ERIC.

o o o

"His rooms are so far from those entered by the thief that he would not be able to hear any sound, how- the watchman went out on his he could not hear acetylene welders even."—*Daily paper*.
Odd!



THEY EXAGGERATED THEIR UPS AND DOWNS.

tion, and as a capitalist street-fiddler Mr. EDDIE BYRNE adds much to the comedy. Miss RIA MOONEY is indeed to be congratulated on her production, and so is Mr. ANTHONY HAWTREY on capturing such a plum for his enterprising theatre.

ERIC.

"A MAN ABOUT THE HOUSE" (PICCADILLY)

A prim headmistress from Wolverhampton, whose behaviour exhibits most of the knots known to psychologists and sailors, inherits a villa in Italy and with it a swarthy scamp of a butler. Having already poisoned the last owner in expectation that the villa will be his, the butler makes violent love to the headmistress, marries her and begins at once to administer

Visitors

AS we are the proud tenants of a seaside flat with a spare bedroom, we naturally have plenty of week-end visitors, and I grieve to say that Edith adopts an attitude to them hardly in keeping with the best traditions of hospitality. Personally all I expect of a visitor is witty conversation (but not too much of it) and an ability to be beaten by me at golf. I may say in passing that it is easier to find people with the former qualification than with the latter.

Edith judges people from a sadly material point of view.

"I think we'll invite old Buffem next week-end," I suggested the other day. Buffem has never actually been beaten by me at golf, but he has come near enough to it once or twice to convince me that with a little more concentration he might do it.

"Not Buffem," Edith replied, "too heavy on the soap."

I said that if Buffem had used a good deal of soap on his previous visit it was no doubt because he had got very muddy trying to play his second shot out of the water-hazard at the ninth.

"I don't mind him making the cake go a bit small," said Edith, "but he packed it with his towel and took it home." Personally I am sure that Buffem would be the last man to do such a thing deliberately, but Edith said that absent-mindedness was no excuse.

"Then I'll invite Tipple," I said. "Tipple brought his own soap last time. Green stuff with a queer smell, and as a matter of fact he left the cake here when he went. And I should have beaten him if I had not hit a cow at the thirteenth."

"I'd sooner have almost anybody except Tipple," said Edith. "When I asked him if he would like egg-and-bacon for breakfast he said he would—instead of replying that he was not really a breakfast-eater at all, but that if we happened to have such a thing as a bit of dry toast he thought he could manage it."

Another man named Gunner, with a terrific slice into the sea (he brings his own balls), she rejected because he has a habit of suddenly grinning in a silly sort of way and then saying "I've known you seven years, so I can put some coal on the fire," which he proceeds to do. Last time he was here Edith and I had to go to the pictures three times in the following week to get warm.



"I BEG your pardon—I had no idea there was anyone there."

"Yimkin is a pleasant sort of man," she said next, with a gleam in her eyes, "and he brings soup."

I was strongly against having Yimkin. He makes not the slightest effort to be beaten by me at golf. He wins by about 7 and 5, and then teaches me how to drive properly. Soup or no soup, I am not prepared to be lectured about jerking my head by a man like Yimkin.

"You can't rely on Yimkin always bringing soup," I said. "It is true that he brought twelve tins last time, but it is the height of improbability that he will do it again. And don't forget that having brought soup last time he will expect to be fed with soup this time. If we try to fob him off with a soupless meal he will take umbrage."

"Ponderby is perhaps the ideal guest," said Edith. "I should be glad to see Ponderby again."

I agreed enthusiastically. I wondered

why I had not thought of Ponderby before. He is a vegetarian of an extremely strict sort, and brings his own food with him, in packets. He also brings his own herb-tea, thus easing the strain on our tea-ration. When I add that he has acute astigmatism but always leaves his spectacles behind in London, and that he has a nervous affliction of the hands that makes him absolutely hopeless on the greens, it will be clear that nobody could be more welcome in our spare bedroom.

o o

"B. P."

AN Exhibition of original drawings by the late Sir Bernard Partridge opens at the Fine Art Society, 148 New Bond Street, W.1, on Wednesday, 20th March. Many of Sir Bernard's most famous *Punch* cartoons will be on view.



"Here they come now!"

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

Author Under the Sea

MR. ROBERT GIBBINGS has an unusual passion for fish. Where we queue, he submerges. Where we fry and eat, he observes and sketches. Clad mainly in a diving helmet he may be met with, from time to time, wandering on the floor of the Red Sea or in the Pacific off Bermuda, and there, under water, he makes his charming drawings. The results of some of his expeditions are to be found in the revised and enlarged edition of *Blue Angels and Whales* (DENT, 12/6), and very curious they are. Of possible dangers Mr. GIBBINGS makes light: once you are used to it it is apparently no more alarming than crossing Piccadilly Circus. Of submarine beauties he can hardly make too much. It was like "living within, or on the other side of, a Chinese painting." It was also very clean. And it was at once, somehow, extremely reasonable. Fishes of bright blue or emerald-green, that seemed only extravagant in an aquarium, passed almost unperceived where they were meant to be—in the shade of pink or cream coral. They showed, by the way, little fear of the intruder: some crowded up to peer in through the window of the helmet (though a few, it must be said, eyed him with a more dubious interest). Fascinating though the fish are, the book has other attractions, too: theories about the creation of coral islands, tales of voyage and shipwreck, anecdotes about professors—there was one who habitually passed through a cold bath in order to reach his rum, thus contriving to be at once sober and stimulated—and vivid little characters of people met aboard ship. If only the fish drawn were named as well it would be perfect. J. S.

In the Gloaming

The biography of a great Liberal who lived to see his party disintegrate, is not, on the face of it, inspiring fare. But so magnificent was the capacity of J. A. Spender (CASSELL, 12/6) for getting the best out of himself and his colleagues—even when these included a disheartening superfluity of retired leaders—that Mr. WILSON HARRIS's life of his old friend is very good reading indeed. Admirably arranged to bring out its subject's dealings with his circle and with his irreplaceable *Westminster Gazette*, the book furnishes a vivid series of contemporary portraits and a compendium of political and journalistic doctrine well worth noting in this shiftier and less well-considered age. The portraits are often amusing and always enlightening. The Churchill, Fisher, Northcliffe and Lloyd George of the period had their humours; and Rosebery, the one Liberal to attempt that countermarch to the Right which might (one feels) yet save the party—comes out in unexpected strength. Spender had, perhaps, more in common with Rosebery than either of the couple surmised: and never more than when he wrote "it would be a pity if we merely muddled into a revolution, for revolutions are things which are least suited to the British method of muddling through."

H. P. E.

In Arabia

MR. ST. JOHN PHILBY, whose love and knowledge of the Middle East rank him with Doughty and Sir Richard Burton, has collected a number of hitherto unpublished essays in *A Pilgrim in Arabia* (ROBERT HALE, 16/-). His account of the Meccan Pilgrimage is excellent as description and also contains many interesting details. Before the economic slump at the beginning of the nineteen-thirties reduced the average annual number of pilgrims to about thirty-five thousand, the influx from Malaya and the Dutch Indies alone sometimes exceeded fifty thousand. In the thirties motor cars began to be used, and as early as 1933 the number which took part in the exodus to Arafat, the central ceremony of the pilgrimage, was four hundred, which, however, did not bulk large in the immense cavalcade of fifty thousand camels, moving silently forward over the immense plain. The hero of the book is King Ibn Sa'ud, whom Mr. PHILBY describes as "the greatest man produced by Arabia since the Prophet Mohammed himself." Mr. PHILBY gives a remarkable speech delivered by the King at a royal banquet. In its faith and ardour it is such a speech as Mohammed might have delivered in the first days of Islam, but tempered by a keen awareness of a world which since Mohammed's day has fallen under the domination of the infidel. Its keynote is the Arab desire for entire freedom from European control, a desire with which, it is perhaps unnecessary to say, the author is in complete sympathy.

H. K.

Introducing China

The main object of *China, Her Life and Her People* (UNIVERSITY OF LONDON PRESS, 5/-), is to provide a helpful approach for the English settler in China, above all the Protestant missionary. This aim need not deter the ordinary arm-chair reader, for MILDRED CABLE and FRANCESCA FRENCH have spent their lives at close quarters with their theme and studied Chinese ideals, customs, history and topography with sympathy and intelligence. A certain detachment is needed to set forth China's infinite variety of primitive and sophisticated in a text-book of this sort. Yet though the authors naturally exhibit some bias

in favour of the Westernizing trend with which the growth of Christianity has unfortunately coincided, they take pains—especially in their “questions for study circles”—to counter the perils of this tendency. One cannot help concluding from this vivid and sagacious little book that China's historic isolation has been responsible for most of her virtues. The indigenous story is more attractive than its “civilized” variants; and the family cave of North China, with its well-warmed *kang* for sleep and hospitality, strikes one as more suited to domestic life than the concrete tenement. But a book whose *Who's Who* ranges from Fu-Hsi (3000 B.C.) to Dr. Wellington Koo offers sufficient diversity of outlook for all tastes.

H. P. E.

Happy Days

Nearly every small boy has a Rabelaisian mind as part of his natural equipment, but once we have admitted this there remain other things about him worthier of discussion. In *George Brown's School-days* (CONSTABLE, 8/6), a savage satire on a public school of 1912, Mr. BRUCE MARSHALL harps on the messier side of youth with a frankness and insistence which may put off many of his most loyal readers, of whom I am one. His picture of Dunmere is hardly fair for that date, but much of it is very funny, pointed with an acute sense of the incongruous and rich in the unexpected phrase. The headmaster, a reverend owl whose syllabus is based on the infallible amalgam of Christianity, cold baths and cricket, is unaware of the almost Belsen-like ordeals manfully endured by his smallest customers. Not so Mr. Rumbold, a kindly old scholar, who knows all about them, but, having long ago lost faith in future reform, does his best to alleviate the victims' present with philosophy and brandy. Our George Brown is good enough at games to rise quickly into the privileged classes, in spite of his father's being in trade, but his friend Abinger, myopic and unashamedly virtuous, who flings Socrates in the teeth of the heaviest bully, has a very bad time. There is a wonderful description of these two taking a couple of shop-girls out for an evening. With its resounding futilities and a caste system beside which Indian divisions are as nothing, Dunmere is a synthesis of all the worst weeds that sprang up in Dr. Arnold's garden. However, Mr. MARSHALL in a foreword declares his belief that they are no longer to be found, so common-rooms can breathe again.

E. O. D. K.

The Spanish Civil War

The Clash (FABER, 12/6) is the third and concluding volume of ARTURO BAREA's autobiography. Its theme is the author's experiences during the Spanish Civil War, it can be read as a self-contained narrative and does not require from the reader that he should be acquainted with its predecessors. The book opens well with an account of the author leaving Madrid for a week-end with his wife and family in a village at some distance from the capital. His weariness of his wife in the country and of his mistress in Madrid; his disgust at the corruption which he perceives in town and country alike; his left-wing sympathies and premonition of the coming troubles, are all vividly rendered. But presently the complexities of the political situation begin to swamp the personal narrative, which, when the Civil War breaks out, is for long stretches completely submerged by the details of the fighting as seen by the author from his position as Foreign Press Censor in besieged Madrid. Is it too sanguine to hope that the time must be approaching when writers will realize that the unpleasantness of being bombed and the other depressing

accompaniments of war and revolution have now been fully dealt with from the realistic standpoint, and if handled at all require an imaginative treatment for which one may search contemporary literature without success? But Ilsa, for whom the author leaves his wife and mistress, makes some amends for the over-documented middle portion of his narrative.

H. K.

Excursions from Here

Holy Terrors (PENGUIN PUBLICATIONS, 1/-) is an appropriate collective title for the fourteen (one would expect thirteen) short stories that make up Mr. ARTHUR MACHEN's book, because each one contains holiness or terror or both. His mind ranges from light to darkness and back again; sometimes it seems haunted by evil and at others, as when he writes of the appearance of the Sangraal in an old church in Wales, to be the medium of revelation. It is curious to read the hateful little story “The Ceremony,” which troubles the mind by its uneasy suggestiveness, and then to turn a page and be comforted by the joyous bewildered awakening of a dead soldier in a heaven for heroes. Those who consider themselves normal will find little normality in any of the stories except in “The Cosy Room,” a description of a condemned cell and the way that led to it, and “The Tree of Life,” which, since it deals with the rather pleasant obsessions of an inventive lunatic, has more humanity than most and also an understandable and conclusive ending. Sometimes the author whets the appetite by including little shreds of unfinished stories within another story. One longs, for instance, to know more about the tide-released treasure at Aldeburg than about the disappearing clergyman who is the intended centre of interest. Mr. MACHEN is a master of prose even when he is least comprehensible. He ends the story about the Sangraal with the words “But at the last, what do we know?” He makes it difficult for us to know if and when he is writing fiction—and that is a great tribute to his power.

B. E. B.



“Have you spoken to the Captain yet about my suggestion for using paper plates?”



"Follow that car!"

New Light on the Homeric Question

(We are privileged to publish a translation of a hitherto unknown passage from the *Odyssey*, shortly to be officially communicated to the Classical Association. Scholarly readers of "Punch" will, we believe, immediately recognize its chthonic significance and its relevance to the Homeric Question in general.)

"... and godlike Odysseus took it in his thick hand; terribly shone his two eyes, and he spake winged words: 'Woe is me; of a truth have I endured many sorrows and seen many cities of men, but now this most terrible thing is come upon me. For lo, heralds are at hand, messengers of Zeus and men, bearing a glorious notice of coding, and they say that my well-calculated code number is twelve.' So he spake, and round his shoulders hung his sharp sword, and on his shining feet bound his fair sandals..."

DESUNT VERSUS NONNULLI

"... came to a grove of black poplar trees, in a circle on all sides, and in the midst gushed down a spring of black water, bitter indeed; above was an altar of the Harpies, baneful goddesses,

who take away the incomes of mortal men. And raising his hands godlike Odysseus prayed a great prayer: 'Harpies, and all ye other deities of this place, grant that I may return to my loved fatherland having yet a part of my income safe, just a little, in no wise very much, though having lost my dear companions.' So he spake, and drawing from beside his thigh his sharp sword he went, taking long strides. In the depths of the vale he found a gloomy dwelling, wrought with well-shaped stones, and on the polished door-post were baneful symbols, INSPECTOR'S OFFICE FIRST FLOOR. Within he heard fair goddesses singing with shrill voice, as they plied a large immortal loom with wondrous red tape: 'Come hither, much-praised Odysseus, great glory of the Achæans,

and do thou quote thine assessment number.' And he went in, and stepped over the stone threshold.

"Now as he stood in the shadowy halls and pondered in his heart, Athene came nigh unto him, in the form of a young maiden, most like to a tender shoot of parsley or celery, bearing in her arms a well-wrought tray with elegant cups of tea. And he marvelled as he beheld, and spake to her winged words: 'Maiden, I clasp thy knees; verily, like to an immortal goddess art thou. But if thou art one of mortals who inhabit the earth, tell me, I pray thee, what is thy name, and who are thy lordly parents?' So he spake, and Athene answered him: 'Temporary is my name, and daily I bear unspeakable cups of tea to the godlike heroes who dwell in these halls, but of my

dear father and lady mother it is not seemly to speak in office hours.' So saying Athene touched him with a wand. She wrinkled his fair skin, and destroyed the yellow hair from his head, and around his limbs she draped rags, as of one whose income is clearly below the exemption limit. Then owl-eyed Athene departed to long Olympus, flying like a great crested tit.

"But long-suffering godlike Odysseus ascended to the upper chamber, and there he saw fair-haired Rhadamanthys, holding a golden sceptre, examining assessments, seated. Then he scattered barley-meal, and slew with his sword a spotless black ram, six years old, and when Rhadamanthys had drunk the blood he said, in nowise deceived: 'Divine-born son of Laertes, Odysseus of many wiles, why comest thou hither, leaving the light of the sun?' So he spake, and Odysseus answered: 'Sir, but yesterday and the day before did I receive shining raiment on quitting the war which we sons of the Achæans waged against holy Ilium, and now a glorious notice of coding is come, saying that my well-calculated code number is twelve. Yet have I left my dear wife Penelope in the halls, and my little son Telemachus, and old Laertes; he dwelleth far off in the fields, and his age is over sixty-five. But as for my lady mother, her hath Artemis slain visiting her with her gentle shafts. Moreover, my goodly income hath suffered grievous diminution as a result of circumstances arising out of the war which we waged against windy Troy, following the two Atreidæ in swift ships for the sake of white-armed Helen.' Him answering said fair-haired Rhadamanthys: 'Odysseus, son of Laertes, of a truth these things shall be a care for us, and doubtless certain small allowances are due. But do thou tell me, and precisely recount, where dwellest thou, and what are thy possessions?' And Odysseus answered him in reply: 'I dwell in far-seen Ithaca, and around are situate many islands, very near to one another, Dulichium and Same and wooded Zacynthus; and I occupy much territory in glorious Elis on the mainland, where I graze my mares. Moreover much wealth do I derive from Phœnicians and Taphians, lovers of oars, who sail on the wine-dark sea to foreign people.'

"So he spake, and fair-haired Rhadamanthys forthwith made grievous assessments under Schedules A and B, laughing sweetly. And thereto he added one under Case VI, for that Odysseus derived wealth from Phœnicians and Taphians, lovers of oars, and said: 'Odysseus, son of Laertes, verily

when the seasons shall have completed their due course these things shall receive attention. But this I tell thee, and moreover it shall be accomplished, without doubt additional assessments shall be raised.'

"He spake, and Odysseus' dear heart was broken, and he wept shrilly, shedding down a vigorous tear. And as a husbandman longeth for his supper, with whom all day rolling-gaited crumpled-horned oxen have dragged a sharp plough over the cornland; gratefully for him hath the light of the sun gone down, that he should depart for his supper; and when he cometh home he findeth awaiting him a monstrous form which he must needs fill up, and with wrath in his heart he considereth whether to tear it asunder and cast it into flaming fire; even so Odysseus considered whether to smite him with his sharp sword and deprive him of his lordly spirit. But this counsel seemed best to him as he pondered, namely to go thence in silence, eating his dear heart.

"Now when the early-rising rosy-fingered dawn appeared . . ."

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Sidelight on the Labour Problem

AND now I have to go and explain to Mr. Plupart. It should be simple enough, but I can't quite decide on the right words.

It will be the second time I have seen him to-day. "Get hold of the Office Supervisor," he said last time. "Tell him we can't expect the Assistant Secretary to wash his hands in a pigsty, and that the whole affair is a disgrace to the Ministry. And tell him"—Mr. Plupart hesitated, weighing all possible repercussions of what he was about to say—"yes, tell him that I am extremely displeased."

"Yes, sir," I said. I felt at the time that even the Office Supervisor might be impressed by the displeasure of a Senior Staff Officer.

Powcote is always difficult to locate. Inquirers are always told that he is "rahnd the buildin'." Ours is one of the smallest of the Ministry's buildings, but Powcote spends an astonishing time round it.

He came into my room eventually, smelling faintly of cloves, and leaned against my filing-cabinet with both hands in his pockets.

"Now what?" he said.

"Good morning, Powcote. Will you have a cigarette?"

He looked at me suspiciously and

said guardedly "I ain't got no flaming matches."

"It's all right. I have."

"Oh. Ta. Now what?"

"It is the Assistant Secretary's wash-room," I said, plunging boldly. "Doesn't seem to be getting cleaned regularly. Floor very dirty. Towels not changed. Cigarette ash in the basins. No soap. Taps not polished. Mr. Plupart says it's a disgrace to the Ministry. He is very displeased."

I moved a few papers about my desk.

Powcote said nothing, but arranged his mouth as if for whistling and rolled a yellowish eye towards the ceiling. He played a short repetitive tune on the top of the cabinet with his black and horny nails. Then he said "Flaming taps."

"So perhaps you'll have a word with your men about it?"

"Blowzy basins," said Powcote.

"After all, we can hardly expect the Assistant Secretary to wash his hands in a p—"

"Listen," said Powcote, suddenly advancing and stabbing at me with his cigarette. "There's forty-four flaming fires to light. Number one priority, fires is, see? That's forty-four floundering grates to clean and forty-four fluttering scuttles to collect—and fiddling-well fill, see?" He spat out his words as if they burnt him—as well they may have done. "An' the coal. The coal's down in the basement, got to be broke orf of lumps the size of this desk—and there's no blubbering wood neither. Rung up my chief Wednesday, rung up and says 'What about some billowing wood?' I says, and 'e says 'Split up some blowzy tables,' 'e says—that's the blushing answer I get. So when my staff comes of a morning—"

"But surely—?"

"Half a screaming minute. When my staff comes of a morning—if it comes—"

"If—?"

"Listen. Two labourers, I got. My staff, that is. Forty-four fiddling fires to light. Elderly persons, they are. One sixty-six, other sixty-blazing-seven, see? Cripples, the pair of 'em. Flaming blood-pressure. Blushing growths, varicose, senile perishing decay. 'Pain back of my 'ead,' one of them says to me Thursday. 'Don't reckon I'll come in to-morrow.' 'Not come in?' I says. 'Pain back of your 'ead?' I says. 'I suppose you don't think I never have no blundering pain back of my fiddling 'ead?' I says. 'You'll screaming-well be here,' I says—'pain or no pain back of your 'ead,' I says."

"But if they—"

"Just a flaming second. Position is, 'You'll be here,' I says. Plain speaking, see? Starts moaning, groaning, telling the blazing tale. 'Got to come all the way from Southend,' he says—'leave 'ome five o'clock. Get back at eight. Pain back of my 'ead all the flaming way.' I told him, I says, 'Look,' I says, 'is it the Ministry's fault you hanging out at the end of the perishing world?' I says. Then he starts telling me how his little house got blitzed, and his wife's got a bad leg and his grand-daughter running around with a married gas inspector, and how much he has to shell out for 'is blushing workman's ticket. So what do I have to do, eh? Plead with 'im, go down on my bended knees. 'Please,' I has to say to him—fancy that, eh?—'Please come in to-morrow,' I says, 'even if you have to flaming-well rest up all morning on the firewatchers' mattress and do light dooty only in the appray middy—'"

"But can't you—?"

"Just arter dinner, see? And the other one—growths of sorts and blowzy varicose so bad he can only go up one stair at a time an' then blazing-well has to sit on it while he gets his puff back. On'y carry empty scuttles, full ones too much for 'is veins. Proper cripples they are. Friday I call a conference, see? Bit of sales-talk. 'Look 'ere,' I says—'ere it is, nine o' foaming clock,' I says—'and half the grates not fluttering-well emptied yet, let alone the flaming fires

lighted, so get blundering-well weaving,' I says. Plain speaking, see?"

"I see. And did you—?"

"Then they want to groan and moan about stairs an' wages an' a forty-hour week an' leaving early because of the fog, an' not having no fiddling wood to light the flickering fires, an' the perishing char's made orf with their perishing bits o' rag, an' one thing and another. So by that time I see I'm going to set about humping and bumping the flaming scuttles myself, see? Me, I'm supposed to supervise, see? Supervise the offices, see everythink's running smooth round the building. Not blundering-well humping and bumping the floundering coal up and down stairs. Then, I'll tell you, the one with the varicose 'e says to me Tuesday——"

"What do they do all the rest of the day?"

"Do? Plenty to do. Break coal, if we've had a blubbering delivery. If not, scramble an' scat about in the muck and the slack trying to find a morsel or two for the fires. That and odd jobs. Emptyin' ashes, 'unting for wood, scroungin' bits of rag. But remember, arter every bit of work they has to have an 'arf an hour's rest-up for their blazing veins and floundering blood-pressure. It's a screaming lark, I'm telling you. And they don't care, see? Don't care a bit. There's about two thousand blistering labourers got to get the push soon in the Ministry, what with the outcry in the flaming

Press to release perishing man-power an' that, see? So my two perishing cripples say 'Why?' they say, see?—'why should we?' See? 'Going to get the tin-tack any blazing day,' they say—'going to get pensions, live on the lap of the land for not doing a perishing stroke,' they say, see? Arter all, they're only floundering temp'ries, retired persons 'oo don't perticklerly care about putting their hearts into nothing menial."

"Menial?"

"Very menial work, cleaning the Cistern Seckertary's fluttering wash-basins. Very menial indeed. Very difficult subject to bring up to my staff. Flaming fires bad enough, blowzy basins a fiddling sight worse. Very touchy pair of persons, my couple of perishing cripples. Can't tell 'em nothing, can't ask 'em nothing, and they won't foaming-well do nothing, so there's nothing to be blundering-well done, see?"

"I see," I said.

Powcote put a foot on his cigarette end and kicked it deftly under my chair.

"At any rate," I said, "Mr. Plupart's extremely displeased."

He moved towards the door.

"I'll tell my two chaps," he said.

"Thank you," I said.

And now I have to go and explain to Mr. Plupart. It should be simple enough, but I can't quite decide on the right words.

J. B. B.



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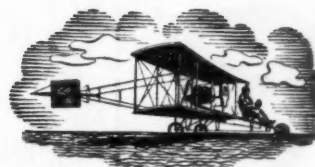


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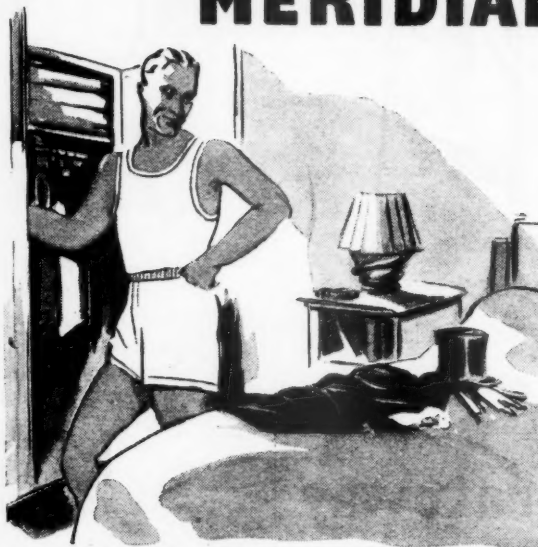
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